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Introduction

The drugs trade orchestrated by organised crime represents a major threat to European citizens, businesses and institutions, as well as to the European economy and security. This is clearly demonstrated by the unprecedented increase of illicit drugs available in Europe, in particular cocaine from South America. Organised crime groups increasingly use extreme violence, infiltration of the licit economy and corruption, thus eroding the rule of law and putting at risk the fundamentals of our democracies. Additionally, the recruitment of vulnerable minors and juveniles into organised crime is increasingly being used by criminal networks highlighting the need for investment in crime prevention policies.

In the coming years, drug trafficking within, to and from the EU is anticipated to remain a paramount threat, with the substantial profits in the drug trade continuing to motivate criminal networks¹. The adaptability and sophistication with which these networks use new production techniques, technologies, legal structures, online platforms and trafficking methods are likely to drive both the supply of and demand for drugs, posing a persistent challenge to the region's internal security and causing impacts on health and on the environment².

Drug-related challenges are addressed through the overall framework of the EU Drugs Strategy³ and Action Plan 2021-2025⁴. They take an evidence-based, balanced and multidisciplinary approach to the drugs phenomenon at national, EU and international level. As part of the EU's continued effort to fight drug trafficking, the Commission communication of 18 October 2023 on the EU Roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime⁵ set out 17 actions in this area to be implemented in 2024 and 2025.

Furthermore, in April 2025 the Commission presented the ProtectEU: a European Internal Security Strategy⁶, which sets out the objectives and actions in key areas of internal security in order to anticipate, prevent and respond effectively to security threats in the years to come, including drug trafficking and organised crime.

Against this background, the Belgian, Hungarian, Polish and Danish Presidencies identified several priorities and actions of the Roadmap to be taken forward during their terms, aiming to support Member States' authorities in tackling drug trafficking and organised crime. As the rolling out of the EU Roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime will end in December 2025, the aim of this Presidency note is to present the main results achieved through the priority actions identified by the Belgian, Hungarian, Polish and Danish Presidencies.

¹ Europol (2025), European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment - The changing DNA of serious and organised crime, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [EU-SOCTA-2025.pdf](#).

² EUDA and Europol, 2024, EU Drug Market: New psychoactive substances – In-depth analysis, <https://www.euda.europa.eu/public>.

³ OJ C 1021 of 24.3.2021, p. 1.

⁴ OJ C 272 of 8.7.2021, p. 2.

⁵ ST 14114/23

⁶ 7750/25

State of play

Action 1: Mobilising the customs community against drug trafficking

The aim of this action was to strengthen operational cooperation between police and customs services, including through coordination between the **European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT)** and the Law Enforcement Working Party (Customs) (LEWP-C) action plan.

The Member States together with the Commission created the **European Ports Alliance Customs Project Group (project group)**. One of the main achievements is the comprehensive risk **assessment** of the situation on the ground. The risk assessment allowed to identify and map the main challenges, gaps, and good practices in the fight against drug trafficking. The work of the project group was concluded in January 2025 and the operational aspects will continue under the newly established **EU Customs Alliance for Borders (EUCAB)**, which covers land, sea and air borders.

The **Customs Control Equipment Instrument (CCEI)** programme provided financial support to this priority. **More than EUR 200 million was allocated to fund state-of the-art equipment** that will help customs authorities scan containers and other means of transport, thereby increasing the effectiveness of customs risk management and controls.

The priority was high on the agenda of LEWP-C, be it the **launch and monitoring of drug-related actions included in the 12th LEWP-C Action Plan 2024-2025** (illicit production and trafficking of cannabis, trafficking of cocaine in maritime consignment)⁷ or the customs involvement in **the drug-related EMPACT Joint Action Days (JADs)**, with particular focus on the JADs addressing drug trafficking.

⁷ 16376/3/23 REV 3

The main criminal threats, trends and modi operandi are described in the **Customs Threat Assessment (CTA) 2025** issued in April (restricted version)⁸ and June 2025 (public version)⁹. The CTA together with the new EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (EU SOCTA 2025) were the basis for the preparation of the **13th LEWP-C Action Plan 2026-2027**. The action plan was agreed by the LEWP-C in October 2025 and includes actions focused on the fight against drug trafficking on the land, air and sea borders.¹⁰

Discussions were also launched on how **the customs community could contribute efficiently to the international cooperation with third countries**, particularly in Latin America and the Western Balkans, in the fight against drug trafficking.

Action 2: Strengthening law enforcement operations in ports

The aim of this action was to further strengthen coordinated law enforcement and judicial efforts to investigate the criminal networks behind seized shipments.

An important initiative within the **European Ports Alliance Customs Project Group** established by the Commission in November 2023 (see Action 1 above) was a series of **port visits** to key EU ports which enabled national customs experts to exchange practical knowledge and acquire additional expertise in dealing with the challenges linked to the fight against drug trafficking and organised crime.

In April 2024, the German customs organised the **European days of control in the fight against drug smuggling by sea** (operation “UNDA”), in which 17 EU Member States participated. The drug seizures derived from this operation amounted to around 11.5 tonnes of cocaine.

⁸ WK 4256/2025 RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED

⁹ 5858/25

¹⁰ 13314/2/25 REV 2

In March 2025, the **European Judicial Organised Crime Network (EJO CN)** held its first plenary meeting, chaired by the Polish Presidency. The EJO CN is a network of prosecutors that aims to address all judicial aspects of the fight against organised crime. Following the establishment of the EJO CN in June 2024, the Council proposed that the network address drug trafficking, in particular via seaports used by organised crime groups, as a first priority. The first plenary meeting covered casework and policy developments in the fight against organised crime groups and drug trafficking. These were also discussed at the second EJO CN plenary meeting in October 2025.

In June 2025, the Justice and Home Affairs Council adopted the **Council conclusions on the enhancement of EMPACT and on EU crime priorities for the next EMPACT cycle 2026-2029**¹¹. Based on recommendations from the EU SOCTA 2025, the EMPACT cycle 2026-2029 includes seven priorities and 13 operational action plans (OAPs). One of the priorities is drug trafficking, which will be addressed through two OAPs: one targeting the production, trafficking and distribution of cannabis, cocaine, and heroin (CCH) and the other targeting synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances (SYD-NPS). The OAPs include actions focussing on a holistic approach to drug trafficking addressing e.g. update of situational picture, financial investigation, prevention, cooperation with countries of transit and origin as well as capacity building.

Action 3: A public-private partnership against drug smuggling and criminal infiltration

The aim of this action was to monitor the development of the **European Ports Alliance Public-Private Partnership (EPA PPP)** and increase the security and the resilience of ports to drug trafficking and organised crime, inter alia through the exchange and promotion of best practices.

¹¹ 9397/25

The EPA PPP was launched in January 2024 in Antwerp. Its workplan was agreed during the first **EPA PPP Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)** on 26 April 2024, identifying four clusters of topics that the PPP focuses on: (i) **Operational cooperation** (e.g. exchange of good practices, information sharing to improve the threat picture, identification of gaps); (ii) **Fighting infiltration by organised criminal groups and corruption in ports** (e.g. vulnerabilities in ports' supply chains, screening and background checks on personnel in ports, awareness-raising measures in the event of a suspicion or threat); (iii) **Policy development and implementation** (e.g. strengthening of compliance with the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code and related EU legislation) and (iv) **Innovation**: the use of innovative technology to strengthen the resilience of logistical hubs and the shipping sector to drug trafficking (e.g. presentation of EU-funded projects, exchange of good practices and identification of gaps and future priorities).

In 2024, thematic workshops were organised to discuss each of these clusters. The Council preparatory bodies (LEWP-Customs, LEWP-Police, COSI Support Group) have been regularly updated on the implementation of the workplan.

On 29 April 2025, the **second EPA PPP SOM** was held in Gdańsk (Poland). The main goal of the meeting was to take stock of the implementation of the workplan and discuss its future direction. The meeting underlined the importance of focusing on the entire logistics chain, involving secondary and inland ports (preventing a 'waterbed effect'), and stronger international cooperation (e.g. with Latin American countries).

On 21 July 2025, an **EPA PPP ministerial meeting** took place in Copenhagen. The meeting was the key for steering the future work of the Alliance and served to define topics to be taken up by the European Ports Strategy, which the Commission will adopt in 2026. In order to effectively combat drug trafficking, the EU will **strengthen cooperation with source and transit countries**, including those in Latin America, and support initiatives in their ports (e.g. via COSI-CLASI cooperation). Security and resilience in logistic hubs were also discussed during the COSI-CLASI meeting in November 2025.

Action 4: Mapping the criminal networks that pose the biggest threats to society

The aim of this action was to follow-up on the Council Conclusions on mapping the most threatening criminal networks¹² adopted on 13 June 2024.

On 18 March 2025, Europol published the **EU SOCTA 2025**, identifying key threats to the EU's internal security, enabling the EU to take a proactive and targeted approach to combating serious and organised crime. A mid-term review is planned for 2027.

On 13 June 2025, the Justice and Home Affairs Council approved the **Council conclusions on enhancing EMPACT and on EU crime priorities for the next EMPACT cycle 2026-2029**, ensuring that the focus on the most threatening criminal networks and individuals will continue as an EU priority crime in the next EMPACT cycle. The fight against the Most Threatening Criminal Networks and Individuals (MTCNI) remains a horizontal Operational Action Plan (OAP) under the new EMPACT cycle 2026-2029, continuing the actions of the current OAP on High-Risk Criminal Networks (HRCN) 2024-2025, and includes new targeted operational actions.

Europol is currently working on the updated mapping of the most threatening criminal networks. Its publication is planned for June 2026.

Action 5: A network of specialised prosecutors and judges to dismantle criminal networks

In order to fight the criminal networks and their business models across the EU, judicial authorities have strengthened their cooperation to better facilitate the exchange of information across all Member States. The setting up of a **European Judicial Organised Crime Network (EJOEN)**¹³ was approved by the Council at its meeting in June 2024. In September 2024, Eurojust organised its kick off meeting to explore how to better work together across borders at the level of prosecutors and ensure that the work done by law enforcement is swiftly followed up at judicial level.

¹² 11153/24

¹³ 10980/24

As the Council proposed for the EJOEN to address drug trafficking as a first priority, in particular via seaports used by organised crime groups, the **first plenary meeting of EJOEN in March 2025** covered casework and policy developments in the fight against organised crime groups and drug trafficking. In September 2025, the Network met with **prosecutors from Latin American countries**, to share expertise and develop mutually supportive strategies to tackle drug trafficking via ports by organised crime groups. In **October 2025**, the EJOEN held its **second plenary meeting**, including a discussion on the Council Framework Decision¹⁴ on organised crime and on illicit drug trafficking and featuring a practitioner workshop on ‘**crime as a service**’ which also addressed the recruitment of minors.

Action 6: Facilitating financial investigations

The aim of this action was to enhance the use of financial investigations as an effective way to fight serious and organised crime, depriving criminals of their illegal gains. The EU has bolstered its efforts to fight economic and financial crime with the approval of a new set of anti-money laundering rules, which include several key legislative instruments, as well as the establishment of the **EU Anti-Money Laundering Authority (AMLA)**, which supervises the work of all the actors involved. Given the cross-border nature of financial crime, the agency will increase the compliance of the obliged entities by creating an integrated mechanism with national supervisors.

¹⁴ Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA of 24 October 2008 on the fight against organised crime, http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_framw/2008/841/oj and Council Framework Decision 2004/757/JHA of 25 October 2004 laying down minimum provisions on the constituent elements of criminal acts and penalties in the field of illicit drug trafficking, http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_framw/2004/757/2022-08-18

The **EU Anti-Money Laundering/Counter-Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT)** package adopted by the Council in May 2024 introduces new and stricter rules that will harmonise and strengthen the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing in the EU. The **Directive on asset recovery and confiscation**¹⁵ ensures that financial investigations are systematically launched in parallel to criminal investigations and introduces the confiscation of unexplained wealth linked to criminal conduct. It also ensures a close cooperation between the asset recovery offices (AROs) and Europol. The Directive will also ensure that asset recovery offices have direct access to the Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA). Other relevant instruments in this area such as the **Directive on access to centralised bank account registries by competent authorities**¹⁶, which was amended in 2024 to ensure that national law enforcement authorities have access to centralised bank account registers via the single access point, and the **European Investigation Order (EIO) Directive**, which contains provisions for obtaining evidence related to bank accounts, banking transactions and other financial accounts.

Building on the legal framework created by the AML/CFT package, Europol's Financial Intelligence Public Private Partnership (EFIPPP) prepared a **Practical Guide for Operational Cooperation between Investigative Authorities and Financial Institutions**¹⁷. The Practical Guide provides hands-on guidance to law enforcement authorities and financial institutions in shaping their cooperation.

EMPACT continues to be a key cooperation mechanism for conducting financial investigations. Criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery are part of one of the common horizontal strategic goals ensuring that these aspects are included in almost all operational actions plans (OAPs) and have had significant results. This will be maintained under the new EMPACT cycle 2026-2029.

¹⁵ Directive (EU) 2024/1260 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 April 2024 on asset recovery and confiscation (OJ L, 2024/1260, 2.5.2024).

¹⁶ Directive (EU) 2024/1654 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 May 2024 amending Directive (EU) 2019/1153 as regards access by competent authorities to centralised bank account registries through the interconnection system and technical measures to facilitate the use of transaction records (OJ L, 2024/1694, 19.6.2024).

¹⁷ EFIPPP (2025), EFIPPP Practical Guide for Operational Cooperation between Investigative Authorities and Financial Institutions, Publication Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurojust set up a **Judicial Focus Group on Money Laundering and Asset Recovery**, which is composed of prosecutors or judges forming a multidisciplinary hub of national experts involved in the investigation and prosecution of money laundering and asset recovery and will have synergies with other partners including the Commission, Europol, AMLA, the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the EJOEN. The main goal of this Group is to improve cross border judicial cooperation in operational cases by enhancing national cooperation between prosecutors, judges, law enforcement, crypto experts, financial accountants, asset recovery offices, asset management offices, and financial intelligence offices.

Action 7: Facilitating digital investigations

The aim of this action was to define possible solutions for law enforcement access to data, building on the recommendations of the High-Level Group (HLG) on access to data for effective law enforcement, issued in May 2024. The HLG process was finalised with the preparation of a **concluding report**¹⁸ by the HLG, which was considered at the plenary meeting in November 2024.

In December 2024, the **Council approved conclusions on access to data for effective law enforcement**¹⁹, inviting the EU institutions, bodies and agencies and the Member States to consider the valuable contribution of the **High-Level Group on access to data for effective law enforcement** (HLG) when developing and implementing concrete actions. In addition, the Council invited the Commission to present a roadmap by Q2 2025 for the implementation of relevant measures. In May 2025, COSI held a discussion on access to data²⁰ in preparation for the envisaged exchange of views at the JHA Council meeting in June 2025.

The **Commission's communication on a roadmap to ensure lawful and effective access to data** was adopted on 24 June 2025 and presented at the informal COSI meeting in Copenhagen in July 2025. To facilitate the implementation of the roadmap and other measures prioritised by Member States, an overview of activities was prepared for the COSI meeting on 18 September 2025. The Justice and Home Affairs Council was informed about the state of play in October 2025.

¹⁸ 15941/24

¹⁹ 16448/24

²⁰ 8453/25 + ADD1

Various Council preparatory bodies have been involved in the work on access to data. A discussion on data retention took place in COPEN, an exchange of views on the certification of digital forensics experts at LEWP-P and on awareness raising and communication activities at COSI Support Group. COSI discussed standardisation aspects on 18 November 2025 and lawful interception was dealt with by CATS on 25 November 2025.

The Justice and Home Affairs Council will be informed about the state of play of the work on access to data for effective law enforcement at the end of the Danish Presidency's term through an information note encompassing the activities performed within the Council structures.

Action 8: Unlocking the potential of Schengen Information System alerts

The aim of this action was to make full use of the tools available in SIS to fight serious and organised crime. The **implementation of the SIS Recast** has been addressed under this action. At the IXIM meeting in September 2024, delegations had an opportunity to share their experiences and best practices as regards the new functionalities. The exchange was informed by a presentation by the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA) on statistics and developments since the entry into force of the Recast in March 2023, by an update of planned activities by the European Commission, and by presentations of national practices. The Commission later presented the way forward on the Schengen Information System at the March 2025 IXIM meeting, while further aspects of the possible future of the system were touched upon at the October 2025 IXIM meeting.

Several exchanges were also organised on **specific types of SIS alerts**. During the November 2024 IXIM meeting, the Presidency organised a discussion to follow up on previous efforts to make greater use of alerts provided for by Article 36 of the Schengen Information System Regulation (2018/1862), in particular inquiry checks. At the December 2024 IXIM meeting, the Presidency notably facilitated exchanges on the management of SIS alerts on firearms, with a particular focus on addressing data quality and operational efficiency.

There were also discussions on **cooperation with Europol**. At the February 2025 IXIM, the Presidency started collecting Member States' views on several aspects related to the sharing of terrorism-related hits with Europol. The results were presented at the March 2025 IXIM meeting. Hit reporting to Europol was discussed from a practical point of view at the March and May 2025 IXIM meetings.

Action 9: Towards a more robust legal framework against organised crime

An effective EU legal framework is essential to provide law enforcement and judicial authorities with the necessary tools to fight organised crime. The Council prepared the **terms of reference (questionnaire) for the 11th round of mutual evaluations**²¹ which will be devoted to the fight against drug trafficking. The primary objective of the 11th round is to address the **operational and legal challenges faced by judicial and law enforcement authorities in their response to cross-border drug trafficking, as well as identify areas for improvement**. The 11th round of mutual evaluations, devoted to combating illicit drug trafficking in the EU, is currently under way. The on-the-spot visits to Member States began in March 2025 and will continue until April 2026. As of November 2025, fifteen on-site evaluations have already been conducted. The country reports on Denmark²² and on Cyprus²³ have already been approved by COPEN and additional country reports will be approved on a rolling basis as the evaluations progress. The final report is expected to be completed in the second semester of 2026.

Additionally, efforts have been made to increase the **resilience and robustness of justice systems against criminal organisations** through a better understanding of the threats and exchange of best practices. An exchange of views on justice systems' resilience and robustness against organised crime took place in the context of the **Council's rule of law dialogue in March 2024**, which contributed to increased awareness.

²¹ The mutual evaluations mechanism was established by Joint Action 97/827/JHA and aims at the "peer" evaluation of the application and implementation at national level of Union and other international acts and instruments in criminal matters, of the resulting legislation and practices at national level and of international cooperation actions in the fight against organised crime in the Member States. Each round of mutual evaluations is devoted to a specific topic.

²² 9428/25

²³ 13074/25 REV1

Regarding the future **revision of the Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA** of 24 October 2008 on the fight against organised crime, the Commission is currently working on preparatory activities, including an assessment of the existing legal framework and consultations with Member States and relevant stakeholders. The aim is to modernise and streamline the EU's approach to combating organised crime, ensuring that the legal framework reflects current criminal trends and supports effective cross-border cooperation. The proposal for new rules on organised crime is expected to be presented in 2026.

As announced in the Roadmap under this action, the Commission is currently evaluating Council Framework Decision 2004/757/JHA laying down minimum provisions on the constituent elements of criminal acts and penalties in the field of illicit drug trafficking, with the help of an external contractor. The aim of the evaluation is to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value of this piece of EU criminal law. The Commission plans to publish the outcome of the evaluation in the second quarter of 2026.

Action 10: Preventing organised crime activities through administrative measures

Europol's report²⁴ showed that 86% of the most threatening criminal networks make use of legal business structures. It is therefore vital that administrative authorities are aware of the important role they can play in the fight against organised crime.

²⁴ Europol (2024), Decoding the EU's most threatening criminal networks, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

This topic was discussed at the **informal JHA ministerial meeting in January 2024**. The **European Network on the Administrative Approach (ENAA)** has further explored the practical application of the administrative approach and the possibilities for cross-border information-sharing for the purpose of taking administrative or preventive measures in order to prevent the infiltration of criminal organisations in the legal economy. In this context, the ENAA has released a **guide on ‘How to get started with the administrative approach’**²⁵. The administrative approach was also discussed at the **European Crime Prevention conference** “Effective prevention of organised crime in the EU” in April 2024 in Tallinn. At the COSI meeting in April 2024, delegations agreed to conduct a **mapping exercise** analysing the possibilities available under the existing legal basis for the cross-border exchange of information for administrative purposes and invited the Commission to **look into the possibility of proposing new legislation**. On 17 and 18 December 2025 the Commission will organise a meeting with Member States and EU Agencies and Bodies as well as relevant EU networks, including ENAA, to exchange best practices and provide practical guidance on how to take administrative action against organised crime, thereby delivering on the action announced in the Roadmap.

Europol’s report on the abuse of legal business structures (LBS) ²⁶ was presented to COSI in November 2024, which restates the importance of further using the administrative approach as an important countermeasure in the fight against serious and organised crime. Further activities are the drafting, in the framework of **EMPACT**, of a **handbook on administrative measures** to tackle new synthetic drugs to be presented at the end of 2025. **At the EU-Western Balkans Senior Official Meeting on 16 April 2024**, the Belgian national experience on the administrative approach was presented to the Western Balkan partners

In June 2025, the Council adopted the conclusions on the enhancement of **EMPACT** and on the EU crime priorities for the next **EMPACT cycle 2026-2029**.

²⁵ ENAA (2023). How to get started with the administrative approach. Brussels: ENAA.

²⁶ Europol (2024), Leveraging legitimacy: How the EU’s most threatening criminal networks abuse legal business structures, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

In the **EMPACT 2026+ cycle**, employing **administrative measures against serious and organised crime** is a key complementary strategy to preventing and addressing the misuse of the legal infrastructure. In the area of fighting the most threatening criminal networks and individuals, an operational action will focus on **creating an overview of the administrative approaches used by Member States**, as well as raising awareness about the advantages of focusing on an administrative approach and developing expertise by taking advantage of cooperation with existing networks (EUCPN and ENAA) and establishing new partnerships and networks. In addition, it will also focus on **determining possible legal bases and operational tools for the exchange of operational and administrative information**. Several other operational actions are related to the administrative approach, including an action that will assess the threat of mafia infiltration, an action to develop tools to combat money laundering in the field of real estate, as well as an action focussing on addressing criminal groups exploiting alternative river routes.

Action 11: Combating the proliferation of designer precursors

The aim of this action was to increase the effectiveness of drug precursors control and speed up the scheduling of substances.

In May 2025, the Horizontal Working Party on Drugs (HDG) agreed draft **Council conclusions on the Pact addressing new synthetic drug and new psychoactive substances threats in the European Union**²⁷ and were approved by the Council in June 2025. In these conclusions, the Council stresses the need to use the ‘catch-all’ provision and invites the Commission to update the legislative framework to address new threats and emerging challenges such as the use of pre-precursors and masked precursors, ensuring the effective monitoring and prevention of their diversion. The Council also emphasises the need for strengthened cooperation with private sector entities, including chemical and pharmaceutical companies, in order to prevent the diversion of precursors. In these conclusions the Council also encourages further cooperation with third countries, taking into account synthetic drug trafficking routes.

²⁷ 8892/25

In ProtectEU: a European Internal Security Strategy, the Commission indicated that it would present a legislative proposal to **revise the legal framework on drug precursors in 2025**, which has been confirmed for Q4 2025.

Combating the proliferation of designer precursors also featured in the discussions with several of the **EU's international partners**, including as a part of the biannual **EU-U.S. Dialogue on Drugs**, as well as during the yearly **EU-China Dialogue on Drugs** and the **EU-China Joint Follow-up Group on Precursors**.

Action 12: Preventing criminal networks from recruiting children and young people

Vulnerable minors and young individuals are increasingly being recruited by criminal networks to carry out criminal activities. The aim of addressing this topic was to make progress in countering this alarming phenomenon and to highlight the need for investment in crime prevention policies.

This topic was addressed at the **informal JHA Ministerial meeting in January 2024** and discussed at the high-level **European Crime Prevention conference** “Effective prevention of organised crime in the EU” in April 2024 in Tallinn. The **HDG** further discussed this topic, which contributed to raising Member States’ awareness of the issue and demonstrated the importance of implementing prevention measures, including the toolbox issued in 2022 for preventing youth from entering drug gangs. During the debates, **further actions were proposed**, such as identifying best practices based on evidence of their effectiveness, developing a better situational overview and sharing data, and looking into possibilities for further research on this topic, which was followed up during the Research Dialogue in the HDG in November 2025. The **informal COSI** in July 2025 also discussed the online recruitment of children and young people to commit crimes. The informal meeting of the members of CATS in September 2025 discussed the phenomenon of “crime as a service”, with a specific focus on children recruited for criminal activities. The **EU Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN)** held a webinar on youth recruitment and effective crime prevention policies and tools in September 2025 and in October 2025, **the 2nd Plenary of the EJOCN** also addressed the topic. In April 2025, the **Operational Taskforce GRIMM** was launched, coordinated by Europol, tackling violence-as-a-service and the recruitment of young perpetrators into serious and organised crime.

The topic of preventing criminal networks from recruiting children and young people, also online, was discussed with international partners, including at the **EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum** in October 2025, and the **EU-Western Balkans Dialogue on Drugs** in November 2025, as well as with the Latin American countries in the framework of the **EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs**.

Action 13: Improving public safety and public health in areas affected by the use and sale of drugs and drug-related crime.

A series of **thematic debates** were organised in the **HDG** on improving public safety and public health in areas affected by the use and sale of drugs and drug-related crime, including on the implementation and way forward regarding **minimum quality standards** in the **field of drug demand reduction**, aiming to determine to what extent the Council conclusions have been implemented by Member States, the European Commission and the EUDA, what were or are good and bad practices or obstacles to their implementation, if any, and finally, what are the possible trajectories for the further development, implementation or assessment of EU minimum quality standards in drug demand reduction. A discussion was also held in the HDG on the public health implications and preventive measures related to **synthetic cathinones** in the EU.

A thematic debate was also held on **crime prevention**, with a particular focus on strategies for reducing violence and drug-market-related crime, as well as a thematic discussion on minimum quality standards and **European drug prevention quality standards**. The HDG also discussed the implementation of the **European Prevention Curriculum** (EUPC), with an emphasis on the need for comprehensive training programmes designed to support professionals involved in shaping prevention, and policies at regional and local levels on implementing evidence-based prevention interventions. On the basis of the outcomes of the thematic debates specific actions were proposed, in particular highlighting the importance of promoting evidence-based policies and tools, sharing best practices to lower the risk of involvement in crime, enhancing quality standards implementation and further raising awareness of the importance of and need for quality standards in the field of drug prevention. The **Research Dialogue** in the HDG also addressed drug demand and drug reduction projects, and a thematic debate on preventing overdoses was also held. Finally, thematic discussions were organised on strategic priorities to addressing drug-related harm to feed into the preparation of the **new EU drugs strategic framework**.

Action 14: Strengthening support to operational anti-drug trafficking operations in West Africa

West Africa has become increasingly important for the global cocaine trade, as it is increasingly becoming a **transshipment point** for cocaine bound for Europe. Some of the world's most dangerous and sophisticated organized crime groups, rooted in the Western Balkans, but also major players in drug markets across Europe and Latin America, have expanded from their strongholds at either end of the cocaine supply chain to launch operations in West Africa. The goal of this action is to tackle this drug-supply route in a coordinated way.

The increasing issue of drug trafficking via West Africa has been discussed with some of the EU's international partners including during the **EU-U.S. Dialogue on Drugs** and the **EU-Western Balkans Dialogue on Drugs** in November 2025.

Action 15: Boosting EU cooperation with countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in the fight against organised crime

Given the global reach of criminal networks, it is essential to strengthen the partnerships between the EU and individual Member States with third countries, especially those third countries on the main drug supply routes. **Latin American and Caribbean countries** are key partners in this regard, including in the context of the **EU-LAC Partnership on Justice and Security**. Several Presidencies worked on strengthening bi-regional cooperation with these countries and addressed this priority in the Council fora on multiple occasions. The recent **fourth CELAC-EU Summit** (9 November 2025, Santa Marta, Colombia) reaffirmed in its joint declaration the two regions' commitment to fight drug trafficking and more generally transnational organised crime. At its margins, an **EU-LAC Alliance for Citizen Security** was launched with the endorsement at the moment of 19 LAC countries, to further deepen and enlarge this cooperation in a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

As regards cooperation with **Latin American and the Caribbean countries**, in the framework of the **EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs**, the **agreement on the La Paz declaration**²⁸ on 22 February 2024 at the **High-Level Meeting** of the EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs was an important milestone. The La Paz declaration identified 5 priorities for this cooperation for the next 5 years. The co-Presidencies of the Mechanism have worked jointly on the implementation of the La Paz Declaration of the Mechanism. Several EU-CELAC Technical Committee Meetings were organised with participation of the heads of national drugs agencies from the CELAC region in autumn 2024 and 2025. In May 2025, the XXVth High-Level Meeting of the **EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs** took place in Warsaw (Poland), with the endorsement of the new set of short-term objectives for the period from May 2025 until the next High-Level Meeting, in 2026. Dedicated Dialogues on Drugs also contribute to bi-regional cooperation, such as the **EU-Brazil Dialogue on Drugs**, the **EU-Colombia Dialogue on Drugs** and the **EU-Ecuador internal security dialogue**, confirming the need to cooperate more closely, including on the exchange of information and best practices.

In the context of EU cooperation with the Latin American Committee on Internal Security (CLASI), the **first Senior Officials meeting EU-CLASI** was held in May 2024. An **EU-CLASI institutional meeting** took place in November 2024 to prepare the **EU-CLASI Ministerial meeting** which took place in Brussels in March 2025 during which a new joint ministerial declaration²⁹ and a roadmap to implement operational cooperation priorities for 2025-2026 were agreed. An EU-CLASI Senior Officials Meeting was held on 19 November 2025. As a follow up to the roadmap on operational cooperation with CLASI, the drivers of the crime priorities and operational action plans on Trafficking of Human Beings, Drugs and Firearms from both EU (EMPACT) and CLASI met in Madrid (Spain) in October 2025, in a workshop format. It was organised and hosted by EL PACCTO 2.0 programme with the objective of exploring synergies and coordinating possible joint actions. Those three crime priorities were adopted in 2025 by CLASI for the first time since its creation. The OAPs of EMPACT for the period 2026-2027 were endorsed by COSI on 18 November 2025.

²⁸ ST 6914/24

²⁹ 6403/25

In parallel, a first EU-Latin America **Senior Officials Meeting on Judicial Cooperation** was hosted by the Presidency at the level of CATS, in May 2024. The aim is to move towards a structured and periodic bi-regional dialogue on Criminal Justice policy.

On 5 March 2025, the EU signed an **international agreement with Brazil** allowing the exchange of personal and non-personal data between Europol and the Federal Police of Brazil for fighting serious crime and terrorism. The agreement was concluded on 29 September 2025. A **similar agreement with Ecuador** was signed on 24 September 2025. The EU is currently negotiating similar agreements with Bolivia, Peru and Mexico.

In addition, fourteen CLASI members signed the **AMERIPOL Treaty** on 9 November 2023, with Peru joining very recently. Ecuador was the first country to ratify the AMERIPOL Treaty, that will enter into force once ratified by at least 5 signatories. This would enable AMERIPOL to engage in a working arrangement with Europol, as the Latin American Agency is already identified as a priority partner. In addition, the EU is also negotiating international agreements with Colombia, Argentina and Brazil to allow the exchange of personal data with Eurojust. At the end of May 2025, the EPPO signed a **working arrangement with the Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors (AIAMP)** to enhance their strategic cooperation, as well as bilateral arrangements with the Public Prosecutor's Offices of Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Panama, Paraguay and Peru, with the support of EL PACCTO 2.0, the EU cooperation programme aiming to strengthen the EU-LAC partnership in the fields of justice and security to combat transnational organised crime.

Action 16: Forging alliances to address synthetic drug threats

With the **increasing production, availability, and seizures of synthetic opioids** in Europe, the aim of this action was to raise awareness and enhance preparedness to counter the synthetic drug threat.

Thematic debates were organised in the HDG on **synthetic opioids, as well as synthetic cathinones** in order to exchange information on the latest trends and share best practices. Building on the outcomes of the thematic debates, specific actions for the way forward were proposed, which include the need to monitor the drug market by enhancing the exchange of information on the detection of synthetic opioids and dismantled laboratories, to ensure an adequate health response to the potential proliferation of synthetic opioids, addressing regulatory gaps, investing in enforcement capabilities and strengthening cross-border cooperation within the EU. It has also sought to tackle the underlying social and economic factors that contribute to substance use by promoting the provision of accessible mental health services, the creation of safe recreational spaces and the expansion of access to harm reduction services. In addition, the links between synthetic drug production and environmental crime were discussed in **COSI** on 18 September 2024.

The threat posed by synthetic opioids is also targeted by the **EMPACT Operational Action Plan (OAP) Synthetic Drugs and New Psychoactive Substances (SYD/NPS)** for 2024-2025. It is worth noting that the driver of this OAP is leading one operational action specifically created to cooperate with the U.S. authorities and other countries under the umbrella of the Global Coalition.

The issue of synthetic drugs was also addressed **with international partners**, given the global nature of the drug-related challenges. In particular, tackling synthetic drug threats were raised bilaterally with the U.S., namely in several **EU-U.S. Ministerial Meetings** on Justice and Home Affairs, several **EU-U.S. Dialogue on Drugs** as well as **EU-U.S. Senior Officials' Meetings**. The EU and its Member States had also contributed to the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats. Issues relating to synthetic drugs and precursors as were also addressed at the technical exchanges with China on in October and November 2024, following-up to the third **EU-China Dialogue on Drugs** held in April 2024, as well as during the fourth EU-China Dialogue on Drugs and **Joint Follow-up Group on Precursors** held back-to-back in Beijing in September 2025. At the **EU-Western Balkans Dialogue on Drugs**, held in Brussels in November 2024, the discussions tackled the synthetic drug situation in both the EU and the Western Balkan region. The issue of synthetic drugs was also discussed with **Central Asian Countries** in April 2025.

Furthermore, building on the 2011 European Pact Against Synthetic Drugs³⁰, in June 2025 the JHA Council endorsed the **draft Council conclusions on the Pact addressing new synthetic drug and new psychoactive substances threats in the European Union**³¹, to address the evolving dynamics of the synthetic drug landscape, particularly in terms of growing production of cathinones and trafficking. The conclusions highlight in particular the need to further develop specialised training programmes for law enforcement officers on detecting, dismantling and safely handling synthetic drug laboratories, strengthen cooperation among Member States and international partners and intensify efforts to track, freeze and confiscate criminal proceeds.

In addition, Poland tabled on behalf of the EU a **resolution on the safety of officers in dismantling synthetic opioid laboratories**, which was adopted during the 68th session of the CND in March 2025.

Action 17: Strengthening law enforcement and judicial cooperation with priority third countries

The majority of the most threatening criminal networks have a reach that extends beyond the EU. To ensure that apprehended criminals are extradited, prosecuted and convicted and that criminal assets outside the EU are recovered, there is a critical need for effective judicial cooperation with non-EU countries.

The topic of strengthening judicial cooperation with priority third countries was discussed during the **informal JHA ministerial meeting** in January 2024 and then further elaborated upon in **CATS** and in competent Working Parties throughout the months of April and May 2024. Also, during the **Criminal Law Conference** in April 2024, different measures to strengthen judicial ties with third countries were discussed by practitioners.

³⁰ 15544/11

³¹ 8892/25

Council conclusions on strengthening judicial cooperation with third countries in the fight against organised crime³² were approved by the Council at its meeting in June 2024. Eurojust's recently published **Strategy on Cooperation with International Partners for 2024-2027** presents important groundwork in this respect. During discussions in the **COPEN** Working Party in the first semester of 2025, pilot projects and next steps for the toolkit of measures set out in the Council conclusions were discussed, including the exchange of best practices, the secondment of liaison magistrates, and the promotion of accession to Council of Europe conventions. Specific actions undertaken by Eurojust across various regions, such as the Western Balkans, the Mediterranean and Latin America – were acknowledged. Ongoing and planned initiatives were also highlighted, including high-level dialogues.

In September 2025, the **European Judicial Network Expert Group on cooperation with non-EU countries** held its **first kick-off meeting** focusing on the Council Conclusions on the cooperation with third countries and defining the working methodology of the group. **COPEN General Matters** in September 2025 continued discussions concerning the implementation of the Council conclusions, including an invitation for the Commission to make a briefing package for a priority country, and discussions on negotiations for agreements between the EU with a number of third countries on cooperation with Eurojust, including examination of provisional agreements at technical level and state of play of other negotiations. In November 2025 CATS held a discussion on how to strengthen judicial cooperation with third countries, in particular Latin America.

In November 2025 the EJC set up of an **expert group of EJC Contact Points dealing with judicial cooperation with non-EU countries**, focused on the identification of best practices and challenges that the Contact Points identify in their cooperation with non-EU countries. During the **second Plenary of the EJC** a presentation was given on the outcome of the **Regional Meeting of the EJC and EL PACCTO** followed by discussions of experiences and practices on judicial cooperation with third countries.

³² ST 11333/24

This issue has also been addressed in the dialogues with international partners including during the **EU-U.S. Senior Officials Meeting** on Justice and Home Affairs in October 2024 and in October 2025 during the **EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on JHA**, where the EU and the Western Balkan partners held a discussion on how to strengthen judicial cooperation to fight against corruption and cross-border organised crime, while facilitating the exchange of relevant information and evidence.

Conclusion

The Council is invited to take note of the progress outlined in this report and to acknowledge that the continued commitment of the EU and its Members States is essential to achieving further tangible progress in dismantling serious organised drug trafficking networks and preventing additional drug-related harm to EU citizens and society as a whole. In light of the evaluation of the current EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2025) the trio Presidencies – the Polish, Danish Presidencies and the incoming Cyprus Presidency, in coordination with the Commission prepared a work plan on the co-creation process by the Council and the Commission of the new EU drugs strategic framework, with dedicated thematic discussions at the HDG on the overall structure of the future drugs strategy and on its pillars. On the basis of those discussions and written contributions by delegations, the Commission is expected to publish its Communications on the new EU Drugs strategy and EU Action Plan against drug trafficking on 3 December 2025, to be presented to the Council for examination and definition of the way forward.